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Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 11 of Security Council resolution 1590 (2005) of 24 March 2005, in which the Council requested me to keep it regularly informed of the progress in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, respect for the ceasefire and the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). The report also provides an assessment of the overall situation in the country since my previous report to the Council, dated 14 March 2006 (S/2006/160).

II. Implementation of the major elements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

2. As the six-year interim period enters its second year, the parties continue to make slow progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. While the main structures are in place, many of the commissions envisaged in the Agreement to oversee and move forward the implementation process are still not being effectively used by the parties.

3. The parties have also not yet activated the Other Armed Groups Collaborative Committee to oversee the process of incorporating and integrating their allied militias into their regular forces. Consequently, this process is well behind schedule, posing a security risk and threatening to ignite further violence. On 7 March, two days before the deadline for incorporation of the other armed groups, a convoy of unarmed former soldiers of the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF), now aligned with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), who were travelling with their families from Khartoum to the south, was attacked near Abyei by a group of SSDF elements aligned with the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). Thirteen people died and 30 were wounded. At the instruction of the Ceasefire Political Commission, the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee launched an investigation into the incident on 18 May, with the United Nations participating as an observer.

4. Similarly, the delay in the formation and deployment of the Joint Integrated Units remains a source of concern. Problems associated with the Other Armed Groups Collaborative Committee and the Joint Integrated Units, in addition to intensified competition over resources, are fuelling violence in the south, where small arms are proliferating.

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5. There were fewer incidents attributed to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) during the reporting period, though the outcome of recent high-level contacts between LRA leaders and the Government of Southern Sudan remains to be seen. UNMIS and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) are taking steps to better coordinate their response to this threat, including through the exchange of military liaison officers and improved information-sharing. In addition to the need for a credible deterrent, it is essential to address the root causes of the problem within Uganda.

6. A significant step forward in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was made when some 3,000 SPLA soldiers and their families began moving from eastern Sudan to the south on 20 April. On 11 June, SPLA withdrew from and handed over control of Hameshkoreib to the State authorities. The redeployment of SAF from the south to the north is also proceeding on schedule.

7. The Ceasefire Joint Military Committee met regularly over the reporting period and has presented three consolidated reports on its activities to the Ceasefire Political Commission, which held its third meeting on 25 May. The Committee decided to expedite the formation of the Other Armed Groups Collaborative Committee and to complete Joint Integrated Unit deployments by 9 October 2006.

8. The Technical Ad Hoc Border Committee, the National Judicial Service Commission and the Fiscal and Financial Allocation and Monitoring Commission all met during the reporting period. The Assessment and Evaluation Commission has formed four working groups, on power-sharing, wealth-sharing, security arrangements and the three war-affected areas. The National Security Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the National Civil Service Commission, the National Land Commission and the National Electoral Commission have yet to be established. The National Petroleum Commission is still not meeting regularly, in part because of disagreement over whether it should be an advisory or a decision-making body.

9. The membership of the National Constitutional Review Commission was announced on 30 April, but its original directive of ensuring the independence of Comprehensive Peace Agreement institutions was omitted from its new mandate. None of the commissions established to date have benefited from the National Constitutional Review Commission, which has not yet met as a body. Law reform envisaged in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is also moving slowly. Many standing laws on national security, the police and the press contain unduly broad provisions or excessive powers that leave the potential for abuse. Additionally in Khartoum, Northern, Southern and Western Darfur, Kassala and Red Sea States, security officials continue to use broad emergency powers to justify breaches of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

10. The National Assembly convened its second session on 3 April in Khartoum. A number of key acts still need to be adopted by the Assembly, including those required to prepare for midterm elections. The Legislative Assembly of Southern Sudan convened its second regular session on 10 April in Juba. It too has not yet tabled laws to establish key commissions in the south.

11. Although the southern states have tailored the model constitution for the Government of Southern Sudan to their particular characteristics, most state legislatures have yet to adopt their state constitution. Meanwhile, the Khartoum

State legislature adopted a draft state constitution, which addresses a number of contentious issues, including the status of Khartoum and the official language in the capital. The Commission to Protect the Rights of Non-Muslims in the Capital is expected to be established after the adoption of the Khartoum State constitution. There is still no constitution for Southern Kordofan State, where a caretaker government has been established.

12. The Political Bureau of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which met in Rumbek in April, expressed concern over the slow implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, but reaffirmed its desire for both a strong partnership with the National Congress Party (NCP) and a more active role in the resolution of conflicts in Darfur and eastern Sudan. From 27 to 30 May, the leadership councils of NCP and SPLM held their first joint meeting in Khartoum, co-chaired by President Al-Bashir and First Vice-President Kiir. They affirmed their determination to fully implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to work as partners towards peace and development. While the meeting was a very welcome development, it did not produce clear decisions on many of the current contentious issues. The meeting failed to reach agreement on the implementation of the Abyei Boundaries Commission report, which was referred back to the Presidency with four options: (a) a political agreement; (b) calling on the experts of the Abyei Boundaries Commission to defend their recommendations; (c) referring the matter to the Constitutional Court; or (d) arbitration by a third party. The parties agreed, however, to form a fully representative transitional administration for Abyei.

13. At the regional level, after a rebel attack on N'Djamena on 13 April, the Government of Chad severed diplomatic and economic relations with the Sudan. The Sudanese authorities have denied involvement in the attack, but the situation is still tense. Conversely, relations between the Sudan and Eritrea improved during the reporting period. The two countries exchanged high-level visits, including, in May, to commemorate Eritrean independence. They also agreed to restore full diplomatic relations.

Darfur

14. The inter-Sudanese peace talks in Abuja concluded on 5 May with the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement by the Government of the Sudan and the Minni Minawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM). The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Abdul Wahid Al-Nur faction of SLM did not sign the Agreement. However, on 8 June, several political leaders and military commanders of Abdul Wahid Al-Nur's SLM faction and of JEM broke ranks and submitted to the African Union (AU) a Declaration of Commitment to the Darfur Peace Agreement. Despite the signing of the Agreement, violence continued in Darfur. The groups that have not signed the Agreement are believed to have orchestrated demonstrations in camps in Darfur for internally displaced persons, and in Khartoum. While these groups have the right to voice dissent, escalation of these activities could curtail the operations of humanitarian agencies and the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and hinder implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement. The heavy-handed and sometimes excessive response by government forces to the protests is also a cause for concern, particularly in camps for internally displaced persons and in Zalingei, Nyala and El Fasher. At least six internally displaced persons were killed and many more injured in these protests. Of greater concern, however, are

ongoing attacks by militia on villagers and other unarmed civilians. Likewise, the volatile situation in Chad contributed to instability in Western Darfur.

15. As directed by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 3 February, the Secretariat has been considering options for the transition from AMIS to a United Nations operation. In this regard, preliminary planning work on the provision of additional support to AMIS and on the possible expansion of United Nations operations in Darfur has been conducted. I welcome the decision taken on 15 May by the AU Peace and Security Council to take concrete steps to effect the transition. I am also grateful to my Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and to the Security Council for undertaking valuable consultations with the Sudanese authorities with a view to seeking their cooperation and support for the proposed transition. Further to those consultations, a joint AU-United Nations technical assessment mission is currently visiting the Sudan to take forward the planning process, as called for in Security Council resolution 1679 (2006).

III. Implementation of the UNMIS mandate

Political support and reconciliation

16. As part of its good offices mandate to help resolve ongoing conflicts in the Sudan, UNMIS continued to urge the Eastern Front and the Government to engage in peace talks at the earliest opportunity, particularly in view of the imminent completion of the SPLA withdrawal. A joint NCP/SPLM commission developed a framework for peace talks in close collaboration with the Government of Eritrea. The parties agreed to begin procedural talks in Eritrea on 16 June. UNMIS continues to consult with the parties and stands ready to provide additional support to the talks.

17. Up until the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement on 5 May, UNMIS continued to support the AU-led mediation efforts in Abuja by providing good offices, substantive expertise and logistical support. With the conclusion of the Abuja negotiations, UNMIS is taking steps to ensure fulfilment of the United Nations tasks stipulated in the Agreement, as well as to support the AU and the parties, and to track overall compliance.

18. In southern Sudan, UNMIS intensified efforts aimed at promoting reconciliation and local conflict resolution. In addition, the multidisciplinary presence and activities of UNMIS — including its close liaison with SAF, SPLA and other armed groups on the ground — have helped defuse tensions in areas of potential conflict and volatility in the south. However, tensions are increasing. Ethnic conflicts, violent confrontations between armed groups, forced disarmament of some of these groups, disillusionment among former combatants, law and order vacuums, and conflicts between nomads and settlers, as well as between returnees and local populations, are increasing. The national or state authorities, sometimes with the help of civil society, in particular the Church, try to resolve these conflicts. UNMIS is involved in many of these efforts, though its capacity to become fully engaged is limited by logistics, security, communications and staffing constraints.

Military deployment and activities

19. The United Nations military deployment is nearing completion and the focus has now turned fully to operations. As of 11 June, the military component stood at 9,570, or 97 per cent of an expected total of 9,880, consisting of 8,730 troops, 663 military observers and 177 staff officers drawn from 60 countries.

20. The advent of the rainy season increases the mobility problems arising from lack of helicopters, as weather factors are now forcing an increased reliance on air assets for logistical re-supply. Banditry activities continued to afflict Equatoria, but they are being countered by proactive patrolling and the redeployment of contingent-owned armoured personnel vehicles. A security review was conducted in all sectors and improvements to the physical security of UNMIS camps continue. The force riverine unit will be particularly useful during the rainy season.

21. The development of UNMIS team sites in southern Sudan was significantly hindered by insufficient aviation resources. This shortfall has had wide-ranging effects, including further restricting the development of infrastructure at Juba and the priority establishment of team sites at Bor, Yambio and Yei. (The latter two sites are now occupied.)

22. The Indian aviation unit has yet to achieve night-flight capability, while Russian and Pakistani air units have yet to achieve full operational capacity. Air medical evacuation capability is functional and the delivery of Kenyan, Chinese and Indian contingent-owned equipment is progressing. The Bangladeshi riverine unit is still being staged forward to Malakal and the level II hospital in Blue Nile (Sector V) is still not fully functional.

23. As at 15 May, the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee had held 26 meetings. As mentioned above, progress on the majority of issues before the Committee has been slow. Both parties have failed to provide comprehensive data on their forces, which now include other "incorporated" armed groups. United Nations Military Observers continued to verify the forces that the parties have nominated and moved to assembly areas to form Joint Integrated Units. Some 8,410 SAF troops (out of 15,752 ready for Joint Integrated Units) and 14,446 SPLA troops (out of 14,929 troops reported) have been verified. Joint Integrated Unit components have been co-located at Torit, Juba and Khartoum pending their formation and deployment. However, the establishment of the Joint Integrated Units remains dependent on a number of outstanding decisions to be taken by the Joint Defence Board.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

24. UNMIS continued to support the newly established disarmament, demobilization and reintegration commissions in the north and south for the implementation of the interim disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Over 250 child combatants were demobilized and reunited with their families. Special transitional support projects were commenced for the disabled and for women associated with the armed forces in Southern Sudan.

25. Establishing the exact number of adult combatants to be voluntarily demobilized from both SPLA and SAF remains challenging, as both parties are still not ready to disclose details of their respective forces. While the Government of National Unity has now endorsed the interim disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the National Council for Disarmament, Demobilization

and Reintegration Coordination established in February 2006 has not yet formally met to address key policy issues to advance the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. The Government of Southern Sudan has established the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission for Southern Sudan and a chairman has been appointed.

Police

26. As of 12 June 2006, UNMIS had deployed 637 United Nations police officers from 39 countries at 18 team sites. The police component continued to assist with local police capacity-building efforts. Some 650 Sudanese senior and rank-and-file police officers in the south participated in 15 training programmes, and eight project proposals in support of local police in Southern Sudan were submitted for possible multi-donor trust fund support. A tentative agreement between United Nations police and Southern Sudan police has been entered into to commence the registration of all police across Southern Sudan, expected to amount to between 19,000 and 23,000 personnel. Despite resistance by some parties to working with United Nations police, agreement has been reached to begin co-location. United Nations police officers have commenced working alongside the leadership of local police in Juba and in sector areas. A memorandum of understanding between the Government of Southern Sudan and the former Government of the Sudan police has been signed to integrate the police forces of Southern Sudan and the former Government of the Sudan police based in the south. Committees, which are expected to include United Nations police participation, have been set up to address the integration process in areas such as organizational structure, finance and training.

Human rights

27. Delay in constitutionally mandated reform of the security apparatus has serious consequences for human rights protection. The present legislation provides security officers with broad powers of arrest, allows prolonged periods of detention outside the legal system and offers broad immunities to State officials for acts committed in the course of official duties.

28. United Nations human rights officers continued to be denied access to detention facilities, particularly national security prisons, despite earlier commitments by the authorities. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, during her visit to the Sudan from 30 April to 6 May, was not able to enter a national security detention centre in Kober Prison in Khartoum, despite earlier assurances from the National Intelligence and Security Service.

29. A draft act for the establishment of the national independent human rights commission has been mutually agreed to by SPLM and NCP. The Government presented the draft for discussion with civil society at a meeting organized by UNMIS. The Government must ensure that the commission is set up as an independent institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. UNMIS has also been working with members of the National Assembly on harmonizing proposed legislation with international human rights standards and on assisting the Government of National Unity in meeting its reporting obligations under international human rights treaties.

Rule of law

30. UNMIS and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as other United Nations agencies, are jointly conducting a survey aimed at gauging people's perceptions of change in behaviour of rule of law actors since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The survey will feed into rule of law policy development and encourage the parties to fulfil their commitments to good governance, transparency and accountability. UNDP commenced a capacity-building programme for the National Judicial Service Commission and the national judiciary. Minor rehabilitation work targeting police stations, courthouses and traditional courts continued across the country. In March, UNMIS assisted the Government of Southern Sudan in organizing its first review of rule of law institutions in Southern Sudan. UNMIS also continues to provide policy expertise and support for reform of correctional institutions in the Sudan.

Public information

31. UNMIS Radio remains ready to go on air in Khartoum. The Government of National Unity has so far withheld approval, impeding full implementation of the Mission's public information mandate. The Government of Southern Sudan has however issued a frequency to UNMIS for use throughout the south and broadcasting in Juba will begin on 23 June. UNMIS continued to support the Government of Southern Sudan to disseminate information to the public in Southern Sudan about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the role of UNMIS in the Sudan. Efforts are under way to establish public outreach centres in several towns across the country, though in many locations government-provided free-of-charge facilities are either unavailable, unsuitable or subject to property disputes.

Humanitarian assistance

32. In Southern Sudan, humanitarian agencies continued to strengthen their presence and the provision of basic services at a time of increased return of internally displaced persons. The fragile security situation in Southern Sudan continued to disrupt humanitarian operations in some areas. Over the reporting period, approximately 715,000 beneficiaries (returnees and host communities) were assisted with food aid. Agencies continued to respond to the cholera and meningitis outbreaks (as of mid-May, there had been 500 deaths from cholera and 400 deaths from meningitis).

33. In Darfur, the humanitarian situation worsened. An estimated 250,000 civilians have been displaced or re-displaced by large-scale violence since January 2006. A monthly average of 2.2 million beneficiaries received food assistance, while the total number of vulnerable persons rose to 3.6 million. Freedom of movement in Darfur continued to be seriously hampered, leading to loss of access to over 600,000 vulnerable persons. The combination of insecurity and the loss of humanitarian assets due to looting has led to a significant scaling down of humanitarian operations in several areas.

34. The Government has extended the moratorium on restrictions for humanitarian work in Darfur until 31 January 2007. However, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continue to face delays and other difficulties in obtaining entry and exit visas, travel permits and approvals to work and move around in Darfur. Access also continued to be denied to United Nations agencies throughout northern Sudan.

Funding of humanitarian programmes remains low, despite some recent generous contributions. Only 39 per cent of the humanitarian funding needs for Sudan have been met and there is a shortfall of $939 million. Funding for humanitarian operations in Darfur now stands at about 50 per cent, while for Southern Sudan it remains at a mere 21 per cent. Several critical sectors remain severely underfunded in all areas and food aid supplies will run out in September or October, affecting millions across Sudan, unless immediate action is taken.

Protection of civilians

35. The inter-agency protection network in Southern Sudan and Darfur is being extended and United Nations military observers are supporting UNMIS protection staff in locating children associated with armed forces. Trained United Nations police now play an important role in drawing attention to rape cases, particularly where the victims are minors. The stress to which the population is exposed owing to very difficult living conditions is leading to a marked increase in violence and repression, often linked to domestic problems.

Returns

36. During the reporting period, United Nations agencies and partners, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), organized several large-scale returns, including that of 4,000 vulnerable internally displaced persons from Juba to Jonglei State, 6,000 displaced persons from Yei to Bor and 10,000 internally displaced persons from Southern Darfur to Northern Bahr Al Ghazal. After intensive advocacy efforts, the Government of Southern Sudan scaled back its initial plans to return 500,000 people to their home areas during the dry season and set a new target of 150,000 for the next dry season. In the meantime, Northern Bahr Al Ghazal and Unity states have both arranged their own returns of thousands of people.

37. With the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, plans to support the return of internally displaced persons and refugees within and to Darfur can now be updated and developed further, in conjunction with the parties to the Agreement. However, for the moment, the United Nations considers that security conditions in Darfur are not conducive to return. Existing coordination mechanisms and agreements with the Government will have to ensure that all returns occur strictly in accordance with international law, and take place voluntarily and in safety and dignity.

Mine action

38. UNMIS mine action teams have accelerated their operations in the Nuba Mountains, Juba, Rumbek, Wau, Yei, Malakal, Ed Damazin and Darfur. Over 857 kilometres of road have been verified or cleared for emergency deployment and aid delivery. It is now possible to drive from Khartoum to the Ugandan border, albeit sometimes only on an eight-metre-wide emergency lane. To date, four million square metres of suspected dangerous areas have been cleared and 1,220 anti-personnel mines, 660 anti-tank mines and 293,933 pieces of unexploded ordnance destroyed.

39. Mine risk education has been provided to over 600,000 people and the Egyptian contingent has started clearance operations. Urgent financial support is required for demining activities throughout the transitional areas and Southern Sudan. Landmine and unexploded ordnance incidents in Kassala and eastern Sudan

increased, but incident investigation, survey and clearance have been very difficult because of restrictions on the movement of United Nations and non-governmental organization staff.

Economic recovery and reconstruction

40. The Government has continued to pursue prudent macroeconomic policies and structural reforms, which, along with rising oil prices, have contributed to robust economic growth, single-digit inflation and high levels of foreign investment. Pro-poor spending has been significantly raised under the 2006 budgetary framework. Nonetheless, there have been policy slippages, most notably the contracting of substantial amounts of new non-concessional debt and the emergence of a large and poorly targeted subsidy on domestic fuels. These problems need to be addressed urgently. The fast pace of non-concessional borrowing, if not arrested, will add to the unsustainable external debt burden of the Sudan and will seriously complicate a potential debt relief operation.

41. On 9 and 10 March, the first meeting of the Sudan Consortium, organized by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations, took place in Paris, bringing together representatives of the Government of National Unity, the Government of Southern Sudan and 22 donor countries and international institutions. The aim was to increase domestic and international resources for development, encourage mutual accountability and good economic governance, and increase the transparency of government budgets, spending and resource flows. Both the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan committed themselves to transparent budgets and announced concrete steps to that end. Donors again expressed support for the World Bank-managed Multi-Donor Trust Fund, though the pace of disbursement remained very slow, with only $3 million disbursed in Southern Sudan, and only $500,000 disbursed for northern states, including the three war-affected areas.

Support from donors

42. The 2006 workplan for the Sudan was launched in December 2005, with total funding requirements of $1.7 billion, comprising $1.5 billion in humanitarian requirements and $211 million for recovery and development activities. The workplan is currently funded at 38 per cent ($649 million). The common humanitarian fund for the Sudan has received $143 million.

43. Tens of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons and their host communities need urgent assistance. Funding shortages have hampered both the implementation of the workplan and the provision of support to these vulnerable groups. It is imperative that donors convert pledges already made and, without further delay, commit additional resources needed to meet the outstanding requirements for 2006.

Gender

44. Induction training on gender awareness and sexual exploitation and abuse continued for all newly arrived UNMIS personnel. More specialized gender training was given to UNMIS military personnel and police, including the gender and child protection focal points, mid-level and senior police officers, as well as SPLA and SAF national monitors. Gender units were established in Rumbek and Kadugli and

assessments for the establishment of similar units were carried out in Abyei, Ed Damazin and Wau.

HIV/AIDS

45. HIV/AIDS peer education continued in Abyei (Sector VI) and Kassala (Redeployment Coordination Headquarters), for the Zambian and Nepalese contingents, SAF, SPLA and local staff. UNMIS also supported development of HIV/AIDS components in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Through HIV/AIDS regional committees, the HIV/AIDS Unit of UNMIS reached over 5,000 members of SAF, 8,000 students and 20,000 other people.

Conduct and discipline

46. Eleven allegations were received by the conduct and discipline team during the reporting period. Two allegations of serious misconduct were referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services for investigation, while nine others were either referred to security investigators or handled internally by managers.

Status-of-forces agreement

47. The obstruction of access experienced by United Nations agency personnel throughout northern Sudan is contrary to the freedom of movement guarantees in the status-of-forces agreement, which extend to United Nations funds, offices and programmes when performing functions in relation to UNMIS.

48. The refusal of National Security, military intelligence and the Humanitarian Aid Commission to include United Nations agencies in the provisions of the status-of-forces agreement has resulted in numerous denials of freedom of movement and has had a negative impact on UNMIS operations. Because of the local authorities' continued insistence on prior notification and/or the use of travel permits by UNMIS and United Nations entities, some programmes have had to be suspended. Violations of the status-of-forces agreement in Abyei and eastern Sudan are of particular concern and have hampered the ability of UNMIS to monitor the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the United Nations capacity to extend much-needed humanitarian and developmental assistance.

IV. Observations

49. Over the past three months, the parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement have taken further steps to advance implementation of the Agreement. The Ceasefire Political Commission has started dealing with substantive matters aimed at improving security conditions on the ground. Some of the other commissions are making slow progress in their work. Both SAF and SPLA are redeploying their forces, under UNMIS monitoring. Overall, the implementation process remains broadly on track and the parties continue to demonstrate commitment to the spirit of peace underpinning the Agreement.

50. However, there are still too many delays in the implementation process and too few concrete indications of real progress being made in key areas. The parties do not invest enough political effort in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

commissions, which negatively affects implementation. In some cases, what is lacking is the spirit of cooperation, inclusiveness and transparency envisioned in the Agreement.

51. Expediting the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement would help curb insecurity in the south. In particular, the Other Armed Groups Collaborative Committee needs to be activated to manage and conclude the incorporation of other armed groups in the parties' regular forces in an inclusive and transparent manner. I am concerned that some of the militia groups could be drawn into local conflicts and become spoilers if the issue is not properly handled by the parties. As an observer in the Other Armed Groups Collaborative Committee, the United Nations stands ready to assist. I also urge the parties to move forward in the establishment of the Joint Integrated Units, another key aspect of the Agreement's security provisions.

52. It is encouraging that the parties are now engaging more in the Ceasefire Political Commission. I welcome its instruction to the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee to investigate the violent incidents that took place near Abyei on 7 March, and urge the parties to act appropriately on its findings and to take steps to ensure that such tragic incidents are not repeated.

53. It is noteworthy that, following the Abyei incident, the parties were quick to activate the relevant mechanisms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to address the issue, which demonstrates how these mechanisms can be successfully utilized to defuse tensions and prevent potentially explosive situations from escalating. However, the incident took place against the background of the failure of the Presidency to take action on the recommendations of the Abyei Boundaries Commission report and to establish a civil administration in Abyei. I urge the Presidency to resolve the impasse over implementation of the Abyei Boundaries Commission, and call on the Government to allow freedom of movement of United Nations personnel in the Abyei area.

54. It is also essential for the parties to accelerate law reform efforts to build confidence in the rule of law in the Sudan. Progress in ensuring that domestic legislation complies with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim National Constitution has been slow because southerners have not yet been integrated into the ministries of the Government of National Unity, which should occur through the National Civil Service Commission, yet to be established. As a result, the committee at the Ministry of Justice tasked with reviewing laws is composed of civil servants from pre-Comprehensive Peace Agreement days. Continued human rights violations as a result of national security laws which contradict the Constitution affect negatively other efforts aimed at making peace in the Sudan both inclusive and sustainable. I urge the Government to make the draft national security bill available for public comment as soon as possible, to remove from it overly broad powers of arrest and detention, and to include in it effective oversight mechanisms for accountability.

55. I commend the SPLM leadership for taking steps to strengthen that organization. I particularly welcome the SPLM commitment to play a more active role in national affairs and to recommit the organization to partnership with NCP in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. I am also encouraged by the convening of the NCP-SPLM joint leadership meeting and urge them to

continue these discussions in a constructive spirit, with a view to giving a new impetus to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

56. I also welcome the renewed efforts to organize peace talks between the Government and the Eastern Front. The parties should participate fully in the talks to ensure that the outcome is legitimate and fully compatible with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. I encourage the Security Council to consider extending the monitoring and verification presence of UNMIS in the region.

57. The signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement by the Government of National Unity and the SLM faction of Minni Minawi was an important achievement and an essential step towards ending the suffering of the people of Darfur. Although only one of the armed movements has signed it, I do not view the Darfur Peace Agreement as a "partial" peace agreement and I encourage the others to sign the Agreement. It is particularly important that additional stakeholders in Darfur be brought on board for the implementation phase. The best vehicle to achieve this is the Darfur-Darfur dialogue and consultation, which will give the people of Darfur a chance to be directly involved in shaping their own future.

58. Our collective efforts to address the crisis in Darfur should not prejudice our work in support of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in particular the recovery and reconstruction of Southern Sudan. Perhaps the greatest challenge for the south — and for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement process as a whole — remains the creation of a true peace dividend for the people of Southern Sudan and the three war-affected areas. In this regard, the lack of progress in rehabilitating and expanding basic infrastructure and social services in the south is disturbing. The gap between peace and a tangible improvement in people's living conditions must be bridged. Otherwise, the prospects for long-term stability and development will suffer. The international community must ensure the mobilization of adequate resources for key reconstruction and development needs.

59. It is clear that the legacy of the long conflict in the Sudan runs deep and that the country is still in a healing process. As the tragic civil war years recede, the parties and the people of the Sudan should, to the maximum extent possible, actively seize the opportunities afforded by the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement during the remainder of the interim period, in order to consolidate the peace, overcome current animosities and divisions, and begin the process of building a just, democratic and prosperous society. UNMIS is helping the parties towards this goal. However, conflicts within Southern Sudan are on the rise. UNMIS will need all its resources to continue its efforts to prevent the escalation of such conflicts into greater and irreversible violence.

60. I would like to thank my Special Representative, Jan Pronk, the military, police and civilian personnel of UNMIS, the staff of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in the Sudan, as well as those working for non-governmental organizations, for their tireless efforts in assisting the Sudanese people along the path of reconciliation and healing.